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I, JANENE PEISKER, TEAM LEADER EXAMINATION SUPPORT AND SALES hereby certify that annexed is a true copy of the Provisional specification in connection with Application No. 2002952404 for a patent by G AND J LEWIS ENTERPRISES PTY LTD as filed on 31 October 2002.

WITNESS my hand this
Fourteenth day of November 2003

JANENE PEISKER
TEAM LEADER EXAMINATION
SUPPORT AND SALES



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AUSTRALIA
Patents Act 1990

PROVISIONAL SPECIFICATION

Applicant(s):

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Invention Title:

VEHICLE SEAT WITH TETHER ARRANGEMENT

The invention is described in the following statement:

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VEHICLE SEAT WITH TETHER ARRANGEMENTField of the Invention

5 The present invention relates to a vehicle seat which includes a tether arrangement for resisting loads applied the vehicle seat, and, particularly, but not exclusively, relates to a vehicle seat including an integrated seat belt.

10

Background of the Invention

 It is well known in vehicles to have seat belts attached directly to the vehicle and not to the seat.

15 This has some advantages, such as the vehicle provides a solid anchor for the seat belt and therefore good resistance to application of a load to the seat belt. There are some disadvantages, however. In order to allow for adjustable reclining of the seat, or a change in

20 position of the seat relative to the vehicle a seat belt which is attached to the vehicle will need to be readily adjustable. Because the position of a seat belt is fixed relative to the vehicle, in some adjusted positions of the seat belt the seat may not be in the ideal position for

25 the user. In general, integrated seat belts (where the seat belts are attached to the seat and not to the vehicle) are considered to be safer than seat belts that are anchored to the vehicle. Further, in some cases it is difficult to anchor a seat belt to a vehicle and the seat

30 belt must be integrated with the seat. Examples of this include public transport eg. seats on buses that are not near the walls of the vehicles. In suspension seats, where the seat is suspended relative to the vehicle for comfort, an integrated seat belt is a safer and more

35 convenient option. Suspension seats are often used in large vehicles such as trucks and military vehicles. Further, in some cases, legislation requires that seats

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must have integrated seat belts.

Where a seat is provided with an integrated seat belt, the seat must be arranged to cope with the very high loads that may be applied in the event of an accident.

5 With lap-sash type or harness type seat belts, where the belt is anchored to an upper portion of the seat back, the seat must be especially strong to resist collapsing when load is applied by the sash or harness. It is in fact often the case that for some types of vehicles where
10 particularly large loads may be applied, only lap belts are provided.

In order to deal with the high loads applied to some seats, it is known to utilise tether straps which attach the seat frame to the vehicle. In this way, at least some
15 of the load applied by the integrated seatbelt can be transmitted via the seat frame to the vehicle, in the event of an accident, the tether strap prevents the seat from collapsing or moving under load. A problem with tether straps is that they are of a fixed length and
20 require adjustment whenever the position of the seat is adjusted or the seat height is changed. If the tether strap is not readjusted correctly, it can be dangerous.

Summary of the Invention

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In accordance with a first aspect, the present invention provides a vehicle seat arrangement, including a seat frame and a tether means, the tether means being arranged to be mounted between the seat frame and a
30 vehicle body and the tether means including a tether strap and a retractor mechanism enabling the tether strap to extend or retract in accordance with allowed motion of the seat frame.

The allowed motion of the seat frame may be normal
35 motion, such as adjustment of the seat position backwards or forwards with respect to the vehicle, or the normal up and down motion of a suspension seat. During unusual

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motion, however, such as may occur when a sudden load is applied to the seat during an accident, the tether strap does not extend or retract and operates to retain the seat frame with respect to the vehicle body, acting as an anchor. Preferably, the retractor mechanism includes an inertia reel mechanism, which is arranged to lock when motion of the seat frame exceeds a pre-determined inertial threshold. The advantages of having a tether strap which is able to extend and retract during normal motion include the ability to be able to adjust the position of the seat without having to adjust a fixed length tether strap, and also the ability to allow a free range of motion for any suspension system without having to worry about a fixed length tether strap.

In one embodiment, the tether means is height adjustable so that it may cope with corresponding adjustments in seat height whilst maintaining an optimum anchor point for the seat.

The seat arrangement preferably includes a suspension system which allows the seat frame to move relative to the vehicle in accordance with the suspension. In one embodiment, the tether means is mounted at one end thereof to the suspension system.

Where the tether means is mounted to a suspension system, preferably a link means is provided between the suspension system and the seat frame, the link means being arranged to resist motion of the seat frame relative to the suspension system. Preferably, the link means is arranged to extend to a pre-determined point, to allow some limited motion between the seat frame and the suspension system, but does not allow motion past the pre-determined point.

The seat frame preferably comprises a seat base and a seat back. The link is provided between the seat back and the suspension system. This facilitates mounting of an integrated lap-sash belt to the seat frame, the mounting point for the top part of the sash belt being high up on

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the seat back.

In accordance with a second aspect, the present invention provides a tether arrangement for anchoring a vehicle seat to a vehicle body, the tether arrangement
5 being arranged to be mounted between the seat and vehicle body and including a tether strap and a retractor mechanism enabling the tether strap to extend or retract in accordance with allowed motion of the seat.

In one embodiment, the tether arrangement is height
10 adjustable.

Brief Description of the Drawings

Features and advantages of the present invention will
15 become apparent from the following description of an embodiment thereof, by way of example only, with reference to the accompanying drawings, in which;

Figure 1 is a view from the back and one side of a seat arrangement in accordance with an embodiment of the
20 present invention;

Figure 2 is a view from the side of the seat arrangement of figure 1;

Figure 3 is a view from the rear of the seat arrangement of figure 1;

Figure 4 is a further side view of the embodiment of
25 figure 1, and

Figure 5 is a side view of a further embodiment of the present invention.

30 Detailed Description of Preferred Embodiment

Referring to the drawings, a seat arrangement in accordance with an embodiment of the present invention, includes a seat frame 1, which in this embodiment includes
35 a seat back 2 and seat base 3. In the drawings the seat frame 1 is shown without any covering. It will be appreciated that in use the frame 1 will be covered by

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coverings and seat base 3 seat back 2 cushions. The seat arrangement also includes a tether means, generally designated by reference numeral 4 and which includes a retractor mechanism 5 and a tether strap 6. In this embodiment the retractor mechanism 5 is an inertia reel mechanism including a reel on which the tether strap 6 winds and unwinds. In this embodiment the tether strap has one end attached to a mounting 7 on the seat frame. The retractor mechanism 5 is arranged to be mounted to a vehicle body, not shown in these drawings. For example, the retractor mechanism 5 could be mounted to the internal wall of the vehicle or a floor of the vehicle. Note that in an alternative embodiment, the retractor mechanism 5 could be mounted to the seat frame and the other end of the tether strap could be mounted to the vehicle, the effect being similar.

In operation, the seat arrangement would be mounted in the vehicle on, for example, rails on the vehicle floor. Rails 8 are shown in the drawings. These may be different from the rails which are mounted on a vehicle floor, but nevertheless are sufficient to illustrate.

In use, the seat frame 1 may be adjusted in height or forwards or backwards and the inertia reel mechanism 5 enables the tether belt 6 to extend or retract to adjust to the new position of the seat without it being necessary to separately adjust the tether strap 6. During application of a high load to the seat frame 1, such as in an accident, the inertial threshold of the mechanism 5 is exceeded and tether strap 6 anchors the seat frame firmly relative to the vehicle.

In this embodiment, the seat arrangement includes a suspension system 9. Suspension system 9 is not shown in detail, being contained within housing 10. Such suspension systems are known, however, and they include resilient means suspending the seat back 2 and seat base 3 for motion relative to the rest of the seat arrangement, for comfort of the user. One form of suspension

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arrangement is described in applicant's earlier Australian patent number 728411.

In this embodiment, the mounting 7 for the tether strap 6 is on a frame member of the suspension arrangement 9.

To constrain motion of the seat back 2 relative to the suspension system 9, a linkage 11 is provided between a frame member 12 of the suspension arrangement and the seat back 2. In this embodiment, the linkage 11 comprises a "scissor" link comprising two members 13 and 14 hinged together at hinge 15. The hinged arrangement of the link 11 enables normal motion of the seat back 2 and seat base 3 relative to the suspension arrangement and also enables the seat back to be reclined using recliner mechanism 16 (which is a conventional recliner mechanism). Forward motion of the seat back 2 relative to the suspension arrangement 9 and therefore the tether strap 6 is constrained at the limit of the extension of the link 11, however. In the event of an accident, therefore, where a sudden load is applied to the seat back 2, the seat back will not extend past the extent of the linkage 11 relative to the suspension arrangement.

Note that other types of linkage than a scissor linkage may be used, eg. strong webbing.

The seat arrangement is provided with an integrated lap/sash seat belt system 16. The seat belt system includes a seat belt strap 17, and an inertia reel mechanism 18 mounted to the suspension system frame and a sash mounting 19. The sash mounting 19 is at the upper part of the seat back 2 and in the event of an accident a significant amount of leverage will therefore be applied to the seat back. The linkage 11 is therefore strong enough to prevent the seat back from breaking away from the seat suspension, even under the excessive leverage.

Note that in figure 4, for clarity the cover strap and seat belt are not shown.

Figure 5 shows a further embodiment of a suspension

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seat in accordance with the present invention. The same reference numerals have been used for similar components to the components of figures 1 to 4, and no further description will be given here of those components. Note
5 that the seat belt retractor mechanism mounting 18 is not shown in figure 5, for the purposes of clarity, although in operation it would be present.

In the embodiment of figure 5, the tether strap 6 is mounted to enable height adjustment. Height adjustable
10 column 20 mounts at a top end thereof a roller or guide 21 over which the tether 6 is arranged to pass. Column 20 can be moved within sleeve 22 and incorporating holes 23 in the sleeve and column enable the height of the column 22 be adjusted and retained. The height of the roller or
15 guide 21 can therefore be adjusted in order to adjust the height of the tether strap 6 relative to the seat frame 1. Note that the tether strap 6 may be connected to the suspension frame (tether point 7) or directly to the seat back (tether point 7a).

20 In some suspension arrangements, the suspension arrangement is not at the back of a seat as indicated in this embodiment, but elsewhere. The linkage 11 may then be mounted to a member provided at the back of the seat arrangement.

25 In a further alternative, the tether strap may be connected directly to the seat back 2 (as in figure 5), thus avoiding the need for the linkage 11.

The tether mechanism may be fitted with a pre-tension seat belt retractor, similar to that applied in modern
30 vehicles, which operates to draw in the tether strap in collisions.

In the above embodiment, only one tether means is used. More than one tether means can be used to anchor the seat.

35 In the above embodiment, the seat arrangement includes a suspension mechanism. It need not do. The tether mechanism may be applied with a conventional, non-

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suspension, seat.

Modifications and variations as would be apparent to a skilled addressee are deemed to be within the scope of the present invention.

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CLAIMS

1. A vehicle seat arrangement, including a seat frame and a tether means, the tether means being arranged to be
5 mounted between the seat frame and a vehicle body and the tether means including a tether strap and a retractor mechanism enabling the tether strap to extend or retract in accordance with allowed motion of the seat frame.
2. A vehicle seat arrangement in accordance with claim
10 1, wherein the retractor mechanism is an inertia reel mechanism.
3. A vehicle seat arrangement in accordance with claim 1 or claim 2, wherein the seat frame includes a seat back and a seat base and a seat support supporting the seat
15 back and seat base, and wherein the tether means is mounted to the seat support, and wherein a link means is provided between the seat back and the seat support, the link means being extendable to a pre-determined position, but not extendable past the pre-determined position
20 whereby to constrain the seat back relative to the seat support.
4. A seat arrangement in accordance with claim 3, wherein the seat support also mounts a suspension system.
5. A seat arrangement in accordance with anyone of the
25 preceding claims, wherein the seat arrangement includes an integrated seat belt.
6. A seat arrangement in accordance with claim 4 wherein the integrated seat belt is a lap-sash type seat belt or a harness.
- 30 7. A seat arrangement in accordance with any one of the preceding claims, wherein the tether means in height adjustable.
8. A seat arrangement in accordance with claim 7, further comprising a roller or guide over which the tether
35 strap passes, the roller or guide being height adjustable, to adjust the effective height of the tether strap.
9. A tether arrangement for anchoring a vehicle seat to

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a vehicle body, the tether arrangement being arranged to be mounted between the seat and vehicle body and including a tether strap and a retractor mechanism enabling the tether strap to extend or retract in accordance with
5 allowed motion of the seat.

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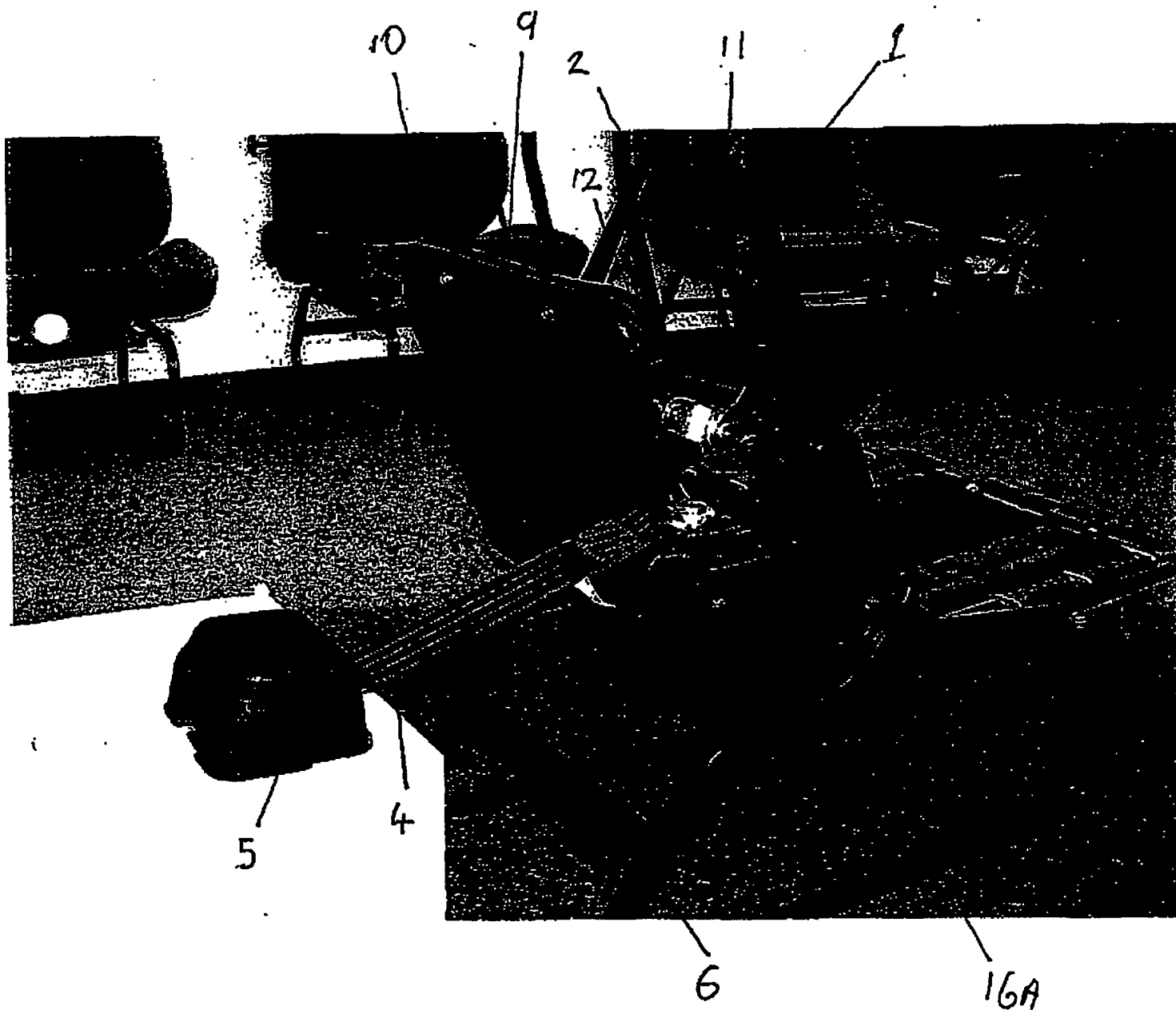


FIGURE 1

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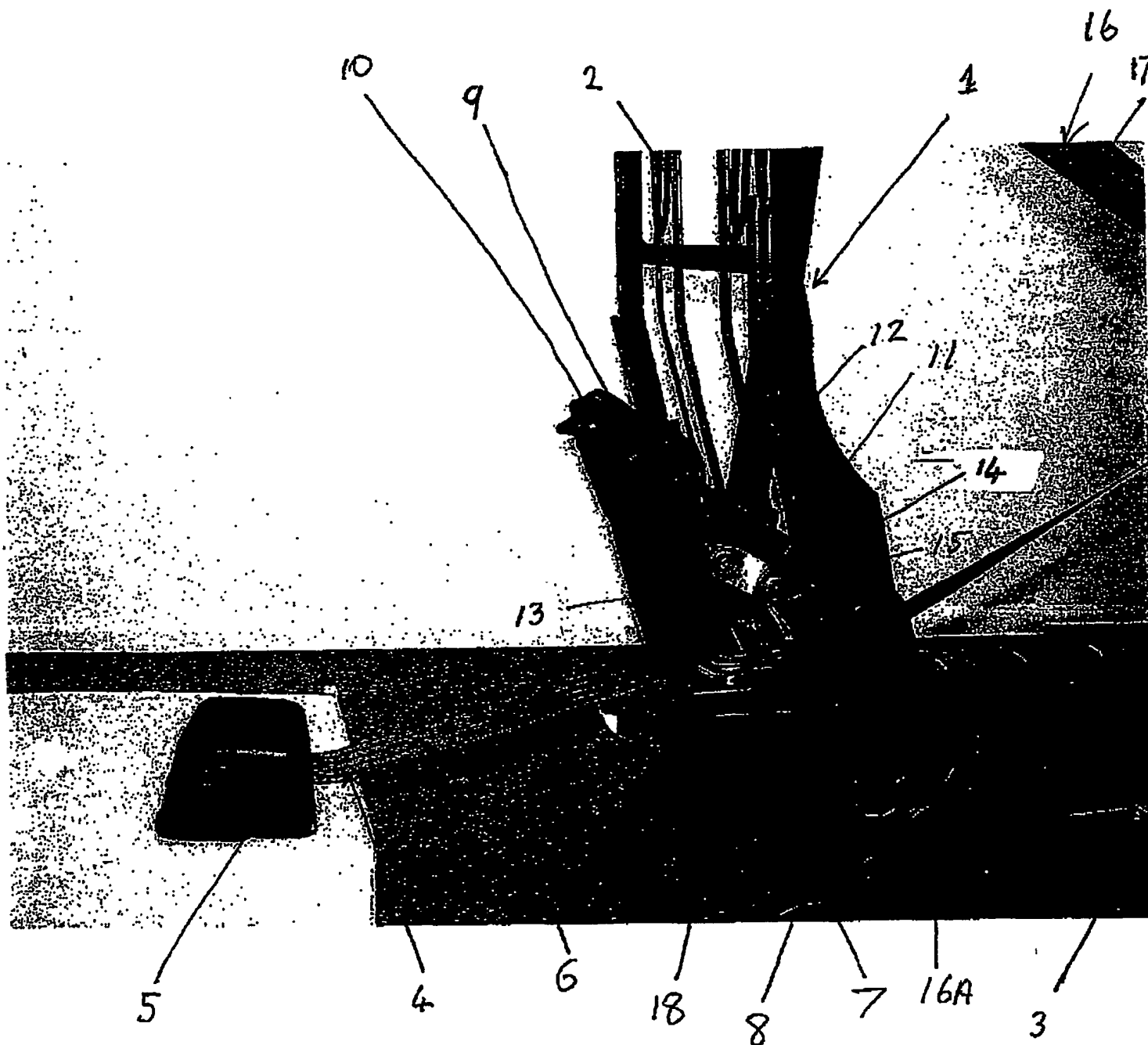


FIGURE 2

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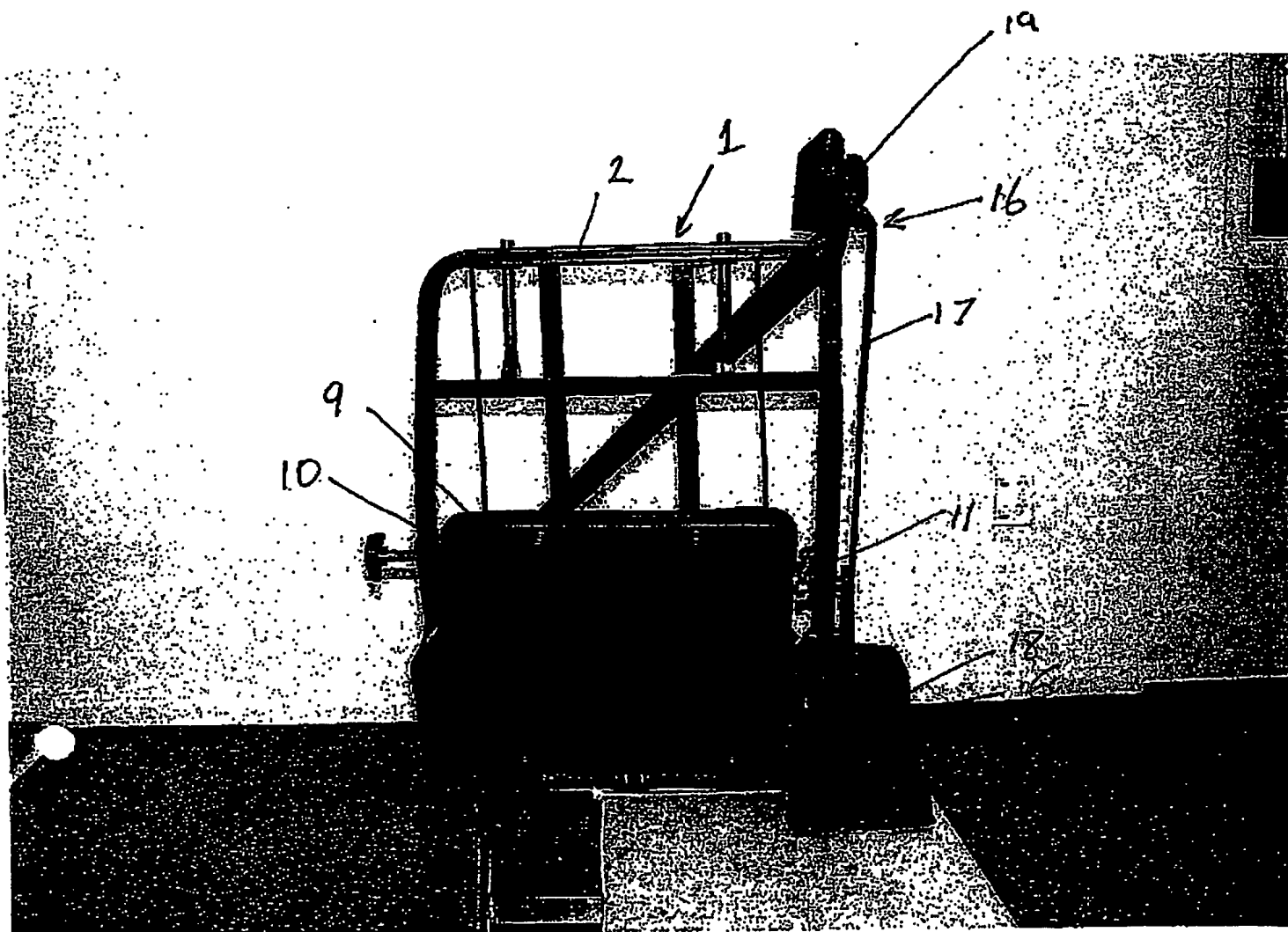


FIGURE 3

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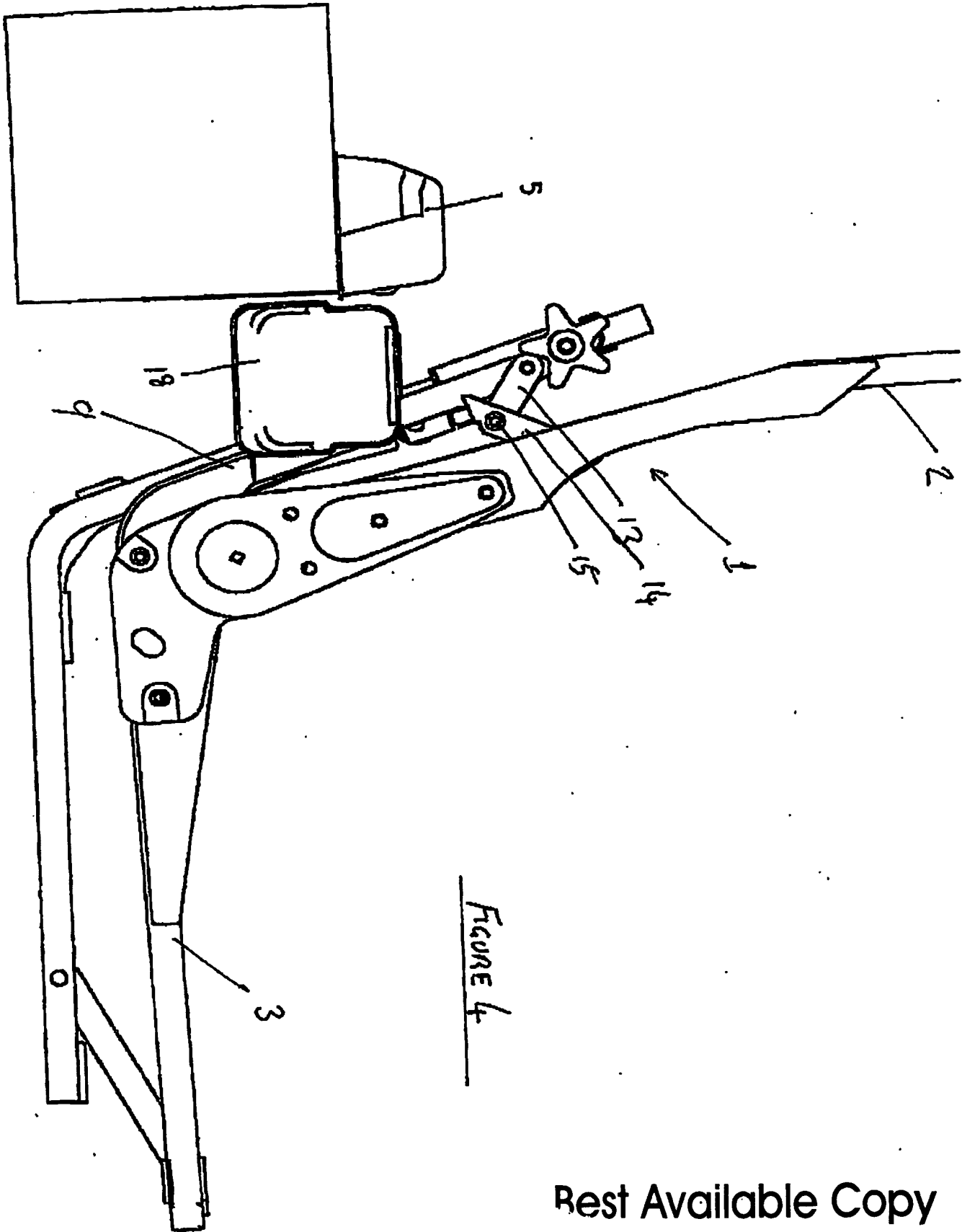


Figure 4

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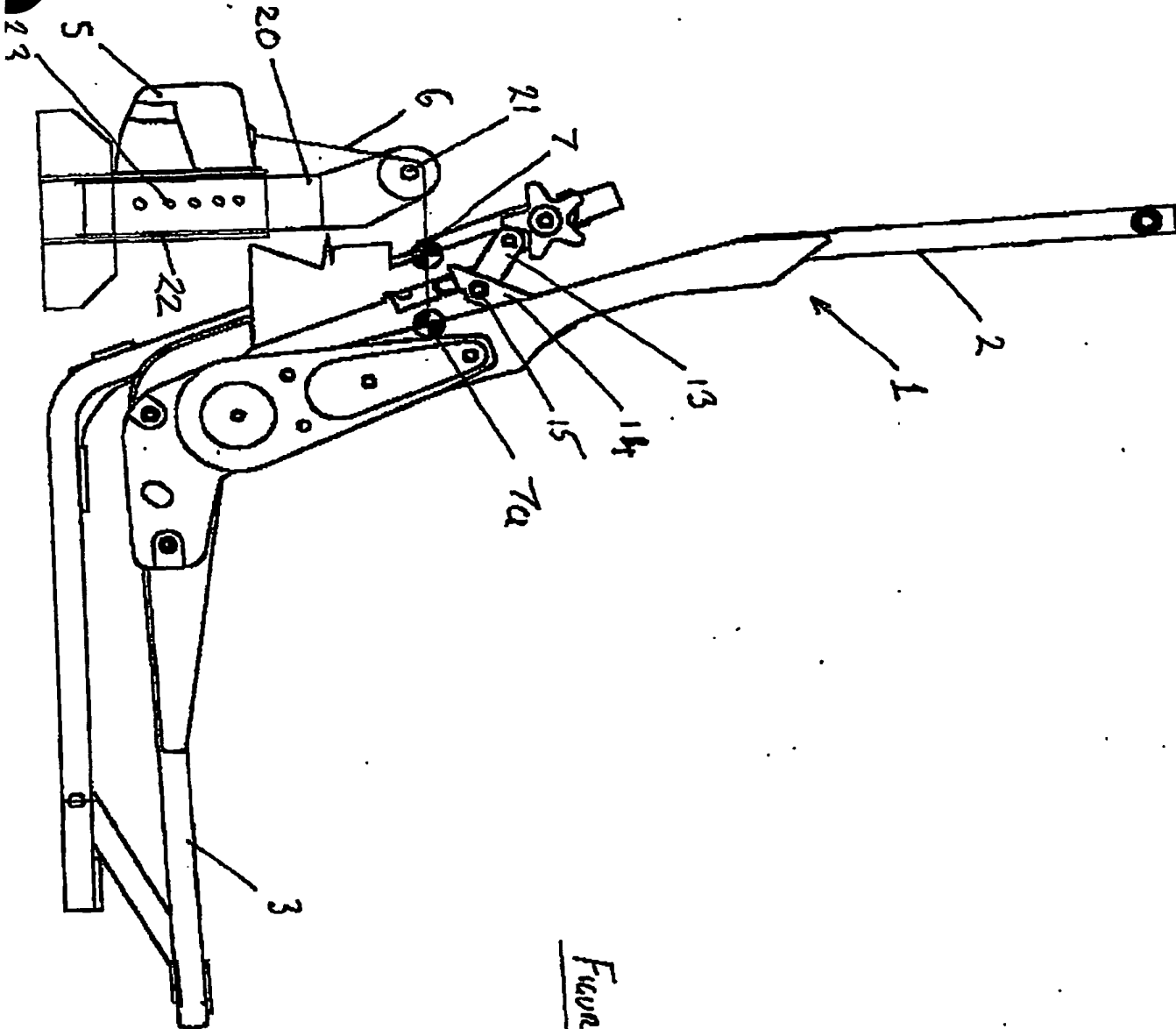


FIGURE 5

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